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have been their founding ancestors' paternal clans. In other cases the correlation is not so clear, since the attached lineages concerned are intercalary between clans that have the same avoidances. But it is not a general rule that attached lineages preserve the avoidances of the clan of the alleged father of their founding ancestor, as can be seen from the case of Ba'at-Lakum yidem, who do not keep the Zubiuŋ taboos.

Thus Talis sometimes cite common totemic and other ritual observances as a sign of clanship ties, and at other times deny any necessary connexion between ritual observances and clanship ties. When they want to emphasize the close interdependence, or the sense of community of a particular group of clans, by contrast with other Talis or non-Talis clans, they tend to pick on common ritual observances in proof of this. But on the other hand, they are equally ready to quote peculiar totemic taboos as signs of the genealogical or social singularity of a clan or lineage. The apparent inconsistency does not worry them. For, as we have seen, Tallensi cannot visualize precisely the structure of their society in its entirety, and there is good evidence for both views in the ritual observances of the Talis. There is a tendency for some clans that are closely interconnected to have some totems in common, and for others to have different totems.

The totemic avoidances found among the clans of the Sie district in general follow the pattern found at Ba'ari; but in this area there is no close-knit nuclear aggregate of clans like the Hill Talis. The relative autonomy of the maximal lineage stands out more markedly, and there is consequently a greater diversity of totemic avoidances.

Totemic Myths

We have previously remarked that Namoos show little interest in the mythology of their totemic taboos. This attitude is characteristic of all Tallensi. Talis elders, whose authority and wisdom in ritual matters were widely respected, and who willingly gave me information of the most secret kind, were content to dismiss the question of the origin of their totemic taboos with some trite remark such as, 'We grew up to find it thus'. But here and there one comes across a myth accounting for the origin of a totemic taboo, especially in the Sie area. They are all expansions of the text 'The animal conferred a benefit on our ancestor (*u daa maal ti yaab la*)'. Though they all have the same moral, they vary greatly in substance.

Thus, according to one version, the avoidance of the tortoise and water-tortoise among the Hill Talis began in this way: 'Our (anonymous) ancestor' was suffering severely from thirst once and could find no water. He saw a tortoise crawling along and followed it. The animal reached a heap of dry leaves, which it scratched aside revealing a spring. Thereupon 'our ancestor' vowed that never again would he or his descendants eat the tortoise; and as the water-tortoise is merely another species of the same family, this taboo naturally extends to it as well.

According to another version, which is worth quoting as an example of the variations in these myths, 'our ancestor' was on a journey and was

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held up by an impassable river. He noticed a water-tortoise descending the bank, and followed it. Thus he was led to a ford, which enabled him to cross. Thereupon he vowed that he and his descendants would refrain from eating this animal and its brother species, the tortoise.

Similar myths are current among other clans that taboo aquatic animals. Thus one of the segments of Sie have the special avoidance of the crocodile in addition to the usual fowl avoidance of the Namoos. The head of this segment told me the following myth in explanation. There was a communal fish drive, during which their ancestor, Layɛn, disappeared. He was given up for lost, and next day a party was dispatched to search for the body. But when they reached the river, they found him sitting on the bank with a crocodile at his feet. He told them that the crocodile had saved his life (*fa u ŋovor bah*) by holding him down and covering him up. Hence he vowed that he and his descendants would never again eat crocodile.

In the same way the elders of Gban narrate that 'their ancestor' was suffering with a swollen hand. He asked friends to lance it, but they thought this was unnecessary. Then one day, as he sat resting his hand on his head because of the pain, a large grasshopper of a species with sharply serrated legs (*saŋkaan*) landed on it. The ancestor scared it away. As it leaped off, it kicked out and ripped the skin of the festering hand with its saw-edged legs. This let out the accumulated pus and cured the hand. Thereupon the ancestor vowed, in the phrase that usually concludes these myths, 'May he grow old with his grandson, but no descendant of his should ever again eat the *saŋkaan* (*ɔn kɔrəgən ni u yaaŋa, ka ɔn bii ku le di saŋkaan*)'.

Other myths of this kind relate how the anonymous ancestor was saved from an enemy about to slay him by the opportune appearance of the totemic animal. Thus, according to one of the elders of Sawalɔg: 'Bows were in conflict (*tap ndaa ŋme*)', ('Perhaps', he added, as an afterthought, 'there was a fight with Mamprusi who came to raid for slaves') 'and our ancestor fled, seeking refuge in an animal's burrow. The enemy was about to break open the burrow when a squirrel (*sinsɛrəg*) darted past. They turned to pursue it, and left our ancestor. Thereupon, he vowed never to eat the squirrel again, neither he nor his descendants.'

As this sample of totemic myths shows, the pattern is the same as that of the Namoo myth accounting for the fowl avoidance. They are more unstable in content, however. The two versions of the tortoise myth were obtained from two equally authoritative elders of the same clan. There is, indeed, always an element of speculation, or of *ad hoc* construction, in these myths. Listening to them one often has the feeling that they are being elaborated by logical deduction. The starting-point is the premiss that the totemic avoidance was due to a vow made by 'our ancestor' in gratitude for an extraordinary service that saved his life. The process of reasoning is to deduce an action on the part of the animal consistent with its known peculiarities of appearance and of behaviour. Informants are never able to tell one where and when they first heard these myths. They say vaguely: 'We heard them from our fathers.' This method of reasoning, however, is congenial to the Tallensi. It forms the

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684 577 man does not even have sexual desire for a sister or a daughter. This is the standard, conscious, sexual attitude to a sister and it is in keeping with the conscious attitude about incest with a sister or daughter. Such an act is spoken of as tabooed (*kih*), but it is neither a crime nor a sin. It is simply despicable conduct that the culprits ought to be ashamed of as unworthy of grown persons. Even children talk of copulation with a sibling as something beneath contempt, though, in fact, it is common knowledge that up to the age of about 8 or 9 boys often try to have sexual intercourse with a small girl playmate in their play and for the most part playmates are close lineage siblings. Adults reprove the children if they discover them in this kind of play, but dismiss it as due to childish irresponsibility.[1] This, indeed, is the essence of the general attitude towards incest with a sister or daughter. It is disreputable, because it does not conform to the accepted standards of responsible adult conduct. Only in the case of incest with a full (*soog*) sister is there a feeling of horror. It is felt to be unlucky in a vague way. She is the person of the opposite sex with whom a man is most fully identified. What is more important, she perpetuates their mother's uterine line and therefore stands for the indestructibility of the unique bond between mother and child. Sexual intercourse with her would be almost like incest with one's own mother; and this feeling is extended to distant female uterine kin (*saarət*) as well.

Incest with a mother, a brother's wife, or a daughter-in-law is in a different class of reprehensible acts. It is a taboo for a man even to sit on the sleeping-mat of a woman related to him in any of these ways (and thus, we may presume, symbolically betraying a wish to seduce her). To have intercourse with her is a very grievous sin. It is utterly repugnant to Tale morality.

684 577 ●539 Incest with one's own mother the natives regard as a thing of such monstrous iniquity that it is ridiculous to conceive of anyone who is not mentally deranged committing it. Incest with a father's wife, other than one's own mother, or a brother's or son's wife is almost as heinous a sin and is regarded with little less horror; but it is known to happen sometimes. In one of the cases that occurred during my stay in Taleland, a man raped his father's elderly wife (his own dead mother's co-wife), whom he called '*ma-pit* (younger mother)'; in the other, a notoriously dissolute young man seduced his father's brother's wife, whom he would [626 533] also describe as '*ma-pit*'. Both were publicly derided in the songs sung during the dances of the Great Festivals. One of the songs about the second man went as follows:

> Badiemaal (his name) you who rape vaginas, Oh!
> Bakyelbanoya (the woman) is a slut.
> Zimbil-Badiemaal is a dog.

[1] Cf. my *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland*, Memorandum XVII, International African Institute, 1938.

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684 Badiemaal, is this how you behave?
577 Zimbil-Badiemaal will never inherit the (lineage) *bɔyar*;
Why did you copulate with Naaho's wife?

539 *Badiemaal, pɛnzierug, woo-oo!*
Bakyɛlbanɔya a bumbarɔŋ.
Zimbil-Badiemaal, u a baa.

Badiemaal, i cɔa ŋwala?
Zimbil-Badiemaal ku vaa bɔyar;
I nyɛb Naah pɔya bo?

It was widely held that both of these men would take the first opportunity to get out of Taleland.

613 The Tallensi explain that such acts are so severely reprobated because
684 they cause deep and irreconcilable 'enmity' (*diuŋ*) between father and
577 son, brother and brother, and this is a mortal blow to the solidarity of the family and the lineage. They arouse the wrath of the ancestors. If the injured father, brother, or son does not bring the matter up before the elders of his medial lineage or maximal lineage, he will be struck down by the ancestors. If he does, he must be ritually reconciled with his offending son, brother, or father. But in spite of such a formal reconciliation, 'the enmity remains within'. The sinner will never be able to offer sacrifice to his injured father with a clear conscience, or an injured son to the spirit of his father who so grievously sinned and offended him; nor may two brothers between whom this bitter inner discord prevails sacrifice together. Therefore, as the scornful song about Badiemaal declares, the sinner cannot, with a clear conscience, inherit the shrines common to the lineage; and since a man's sins spiritually taint his children and children's children, the sinner's whole line of agnatic descendants will be virtually outcast from the moral unity of the lineage, even if they are allowed to participate formally in the cult of its ancestors. Again, a man who has seduced his brother's wife cannot inherit her after his death, for he has broken the bond of brotherhood. The incestuous sexual act is sinful because it disrupts the moral relationship of father and son or brother and brother, and thus undermines the solidarity of the lineage at its core. There is a magical deterrent as well, which reflects this. If two men have sexual relations with the same woman and one of them gets ill, the other may not see him; it would cause him to sink and perhaps die; and to shun a sick parent, sibling, or child is the very negation of family solidarity.

593 A man's 'fathers', 'brothers', and 'sons' within the limits of the nuclear
613 lineage are the men who have the most direct interest in his wife, especially in her reproductive powers. They will all be concerned in, and one or other of them will be responsible for, the payment of her bride-price. His children mean almost as much to them as to him. They